

# THE DAVID W. NIVEN COLLECTION OF EARLY JAZZ LEGENDS 1921-1991

Meticulously Collected, Compiled, and Narrated by David W. Niven, 1930-1993

Generously Donated by David W. Niven to the Foxborough High School Jazz Program, Stephen C. Massey, Director, 2010

Archived to CD-Quality Digital Audio by Kevin J. Powers, 2010-2011

**650 tapes · 1,000 hours · 1,378 WAV files · 637 GB · 691 JPEG scans of cassette liner cards & literature**

NOTE: Over time, the quality of some tapes has degraded more than others. These files are CD-quality reproductions of what was on the tapes as of 2010-2011.

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Henry "Red" Allen (trumpet)	Andy Kirk Orchestra <sup>8</sup> (big band)
Louis Armstrong <sup>1</sup> (cornet, trumpet, vocal)	Tommy Ladnier (trumpet)
Chet Baker <sup>2</sup> (trumpet, flugelhorn, vocal)	Eddie Lang (guitar) (same tapes as Joe Venuti)
Sidney Bechet (clarinet)	McKinney's Cotton Pickers (big band)
Bix Beiderbecke (trumpet)	Mid 40's All Stars (miscellaneous)
Chu Berry (tenor sax)	Mid 50's All Stars (miscellaneous)
Clifford Brown (trumpet)	Ernest "Punch" Miller (trumpet)
Lawrence Brown <sup>3</sup> (trombone)	Thelonious Monk (piano)
Pete Brown (alto sax)	Jelly Roll Morton (piano)
California Ramblers (big band)	Jimmie Noone (clarinet)
Benny Carter <sup>4</sup> (arr., big band, alto sax, clar., trumpet)	Red Norvo (vibes)
Charlie Christian (guitar)	Floyd O'Brien (trombone)
Buck Clayton <sup>5</sup> (trumpet, arranger)	King Oliver (cornet, trumpet)
Wild Bill Davison (cornet, trumpet)	Kid Ory (trombone)
Vic Dickenson (trombone)	Charlie Parker (alto sax)
Johnnie Dodds (clarinet)	Joe Pass (guitar)
Harry Edison (trumpet)	Oscar Peterson <sup>9</sup> (piano)
Roy Eldridge (trumpet)	Bud Powell (piano)
Duke Ellington (piano, arr., big band)	Andre Previn (piano)
Duke's Sidemen (piano, arr.)	Django Reinhardt (guitar)
Bill Evans (piano)	Gene Schroeder (piano)
Bud Freeman (tenor sax)	Frank Sinatra (vocal)
Stan Getz (tenor sax)	Bessie Smith (vocal)
Benny Goodman <sup>6</sup> (clarinet, big band)	Willie "The Lion" Smith (piano)
Al Grey (trombone)	Joe Sullivan (piano)
Bobby Hackett (cornet, trumpet, vocal)	Art Tatum (piano)
Scott Hamilton (tenor sax)	Jack Teagarden (trombone)
Lionel Hampton (vibes)	Frank Teschemacher (clarinet)
Jimmy Harrison (trombone)	Clark Terry <sup>10</sup> (trumpet, flugelhorn)
Coleman Hawkins (tenor sax)	Frank Trumbauer (C-melody sax, clarinet, alto sax)
Fletcher Henderson (arranger, big band)	Joe Venuti (violin) (same tapes as Eddie Lang)
J.C. Higginbotham (trombone)	Fats Waller (piano)
Earl Hines (piano)	Dinah Washington (vocal)
Johnny Hodges <sup>7</sup> (alto sax)	Chick Webb's Orchestra (big band)
Billie Holiday (vocal)	Ben Webster <sup>11,12</sup> (tenor sax)
J.J. Johnson (trombone)	Teddy Wilson <sup>13</sup> (piano)
James P. Johnson (piano)	Lester Young <sup>14</sup> (tenor sax)
Keg Johnson (trombone)	Trummy Young (trombone)
Barney Kessel (guitar)	

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<sup>1</sup> Includes some Jack Teagarden (trombone).

<sup>2</sup> Includes some Gerry Mulligan (baritone sax).

<sup>3</sup> See also Duke Ellington (piano, arranger, big band).

<sup>4</sup> Includes some Count Basie (piano, big band).

<sup>5</sup> Includes some Count Basie (piano, big band).

<sup>6</sup> Includes some Charlie Christian (guitar), Lionel Hampton (vibes), Harry James (trumpet), Gene Krupa (drums), Teddy Wilson (piano).

<sup>7</sup> See also Duke Ellington (piano, arranger, big band).

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<sup>8</sup> Includes some Mary Lou Williams (piano, arranger).

<sup>9</sup> Includes some Ben Webster (tenor sax).

<sup>10</sup> See also Duke Ellington (piano, arranger, big band).

<sup>11</sup> See also Duke Ellington (piano, arranger, big band).

<sup>12</sup> Includes some Bennie Moten (piano, big band).

<sup>13</sup> Includes some Benny Goodman (clarinet, big band).

<sup>14</sup> Includes some Count Basie (piano, big band).

## **An Early Jazz Recording Collection**

**by David W. Niven**

My 20-year-old cousin introduced me to jazz when I was 10. It was a 10" 78 RPM OK recording of "My Heart" made in Chicago on November 12, 1925, by Louis Armstrong's Hot Five with Kid Ory, trombone; Johnny Dodds, clarinet; Lil Armstrong, piano; and Johnny St. Cyr, banjo. On the reverse was "Cornet Chop Suey."

My hip cousin then advised me to get some recordings by another cornetist, Bix Beiderbecke, who started recording for OK the same year (1925). I dug, again, into my newspaper route money (35 cents) and bought the October 5, 1927, recording of "At the Jazz Band Ball," backed by "Jazz Me Blues" by "Bix and his Gang": Bix on cornet; Bill Rank, trombone; Don Murray, clarinet; Adrian Rollini, bass sax; Frank Signorelli, piano; and Chauncey Morehouse, drums. Over the next few years, I acquired every record Bix made prior to his early death in 1931.

Encouraged by my interest in jazz recordings, my cousin came up with a third suggestion for my collection: Duke Ellington. One year prior to Louis' and Bix's first recording, Duke and his six piece band "The Washingtonians" with Bubber Miley, cornet; Charlie Irvis, trombone; Otto Hardwicke, sax; Fred Guy, banjo; Sonny Greer, drums; and Duke, piano, had their initial commercial recording date in November 1924. I became the proud owner of every recording up to the start of WWII and some 75% of his recordings until his death in 1974, some 180 hours of the recorded Duke Ellington.

Throughout the ten years prior to WWII, during my high school and college years, my 78 RPM 10", followed by 33 1/3 RPM LP, collection grew to the thousands. All the big names of jazz, along with lesser legends, were included, and I found myself with a first class treasure of early jazz music. But I also found that such a collection was a first-class burden when I was moving through the post-war years with family, financial, and other fidelity responsibilities taking priority. I had always hoped that maybe at least one of my kids would show an interest in my collection, so I began making tapes that could include a chronological compilation of my collection, along with commentary: date and place of recording, personnel, soloists, etc.

The main reason for doing this rather major project was to put my collection into some kind of compendium form that would attract my children to the music that had been of such significance in my life.

My collection amounted to over 10,000<sup>15</sup> hours of tapes. I will list here most (but not all) of the Legends included, along with the years of their recording and the number of hours on the tapes.

No two people will agree with my selection of Legends. I decided to choose from the years prior to the BeBop period, i.e., before Gillespie, Bird, Monk, Miles.

### **Archivist's Notes**

**by Kevin J. Powers**

#### *Origins*

It appears, based on Mr. Niven's audio commentaries referencing certain artists still being alive at the time of the commentaries (for example, Buck Clayton, who passed away in 1991, is living, and Johnny Hodges' salary is compared to "1993 dollars"), that he put the tape compilation together during a period of time beginning somewhere in the mid to late 1980s and ending somewhere in the early 1990s. His own memory on this point is no longer clear. In my conversations with Mr. Niven, he has indicated that the materials in this selection of "Early Jazz Legends" only represents about 40-50% of what he once had in his jazz record collection. Other legends, such as Bennie Moten and many, many others, were in his collection did not make the "cut" for these tapes.

Mr. Niven contacted Steve Massey, Director of Music for the Foxborough Public Schools and Director of the Foxborough High School Jazz Program, in autumn of 2010 with an offer for the music program to "download" the tapes for use by the students. Mr. Niven was probably not aware of the fact that there is no way to download cassette tapes as one would download a CD or other digital medium to a computer. Instead, cassette tapes, to be converted to a digital format, must be played back in their entirety into a

<sup>15</sup> Archivist's note: The actual figure is "over 1,000 hours of tapes," a still very remarkable collection.

computer sound card and recorded in real-time—just as creating a new cassette from another cassette requires playing the entire source cassette while recording into the copy cassette. In other words, while a CD can be downloaded to digital audio in a minute or so, a 90-minute cassette requires 90 minutes in order to be converted to digital audio; a 110-minute cassette requires 110 minutes in order to be converted to digital audio, and so forth.

### *Equipment & Process*

For this project, I used a TEAC AD-500 cassette deck, a desktop computer with a modern SoundBlaster sound card, and the audio recording program GoldWave. Each cassette was recorded to a single WAV-format file at 44100 kHz, 16-bit quality, to match the quality of CD-audio. Each resulting WAV file was split at the division between Side A and Side B of the cassette, in order to make it possible for each WAV file to fit on a single 80-minute CD.

I did not have the time (though perhaps someone else will in the future) to cut the WAV files into shorter segments for each individual tune. To have done so would have delayed this project many years. At any rate, much of the joy involved in listening to these tapes is having Mr. Niven's insightful commentary as a guide. Especially for a generation of listeners who have grown up pulling individual MP3 files for specific tunes off of the Internet, it is a beneficial experience to have a jazz expert (as Mr. Niven most definitely is) guide the listener through the life and times of the most illustrious figures in jazz—and, in the process, introduce the listener to numerous recordings with which he is doubtless unfamiliar.

Although MP3 files are more common than WAV files, only WAV files, while much larger, are complete, uncompressed reproductions of the sound recorded by the computer. The compression process involved in producing an MP3 removes portions of sound. Therefore, while this project will ultimately include a corresponding set of high-quality MP3 files, the WAV files will remain as a fully accurate reproduction of the tapes.

At Steve Massey's request, I began archiving these cassettes in November of 2010. The project was completed in October of 2011. We started with Benny Goodman Tape 1, and we ended the initial run with the

final recordings of Duke Ellington And His Orchestra. We then made corrected copies of about 60 tapes that appeared to have had gaps in their initial run copies.

### *Liner Cards*

In order to create a complete copy of all of Mr. Niven's liner cards, I scanned each card at 400 dpi resolution. The JPEG images that resulted are as legible as the original liner cards. Until I or someone else type up all of the liner card listings, we have a complete copy of the cards.

Each card lists artist, tape number, years, and tunes. Below the tunes is a key to the numbers next to each tune, which indicate the source recordings. For example “1 Cottontail” and “1: RCA Victor LP In A Mellotone” indicates that the recording of “Cottontail” is from RCA Victor LP “In a Mellotone.”

### *Condition of the Tapes*

Many, if not most, of these tapes are in terrific shape, but others are in mediocre or even poor condition. I have rigorously and regularly cleaned, maintained, and tested (with known excellent-condition cassettes) the heads of the cassette deck used for this project. All defects heard here are on the tapes themselves rather than the deck used to play the tapes back.

### *Final Thoughts*

This is an extraordinary collection. It has been Mr. Niven's life's work. It represents the very finest American music of the twentieth century, and because Mr. Niven took the time and care to record these commentaries, he has produced a library that is accessible to everyone from jazz aficionados to jazz novices. For the Foxborough High School Jazz Program, which has enriched the lives of so many students, this remarkable compendium of jazz recordings should similarly enrich the program itself. This is all made even more remarkable by the fact that, had Mr. Niven not had the foresight to contact Steve Massey in 2010, this entire collection may have disappeared. How many collections of jazz like this get junked after estate sales every year?

Thank you, David—your devotion to jazz will enrich the musical education of hundreds of students!

**David W. Niven**  
**Collection of Legends of Jazz on 90-Minute Tapes<sup>16</sup>**

<b><u>Legend</u></b>	<b><u>Years Recordings Made</u></b>	<b><u>Total Hours</u></b>
<b>Trumpets</b>		
Louis Armstrong	1923-1972	54 hours
Roy Eldridge	1935-1977	7.5 hours
Bix Beiderbecke	1924-1930	7.5 hours
Henry "Red" Allen	1929-1965	9 hours
Tommy Ladnier	1923-1938	1.5 hours
Bobby Hackett	1938-1975	15 hours
Wild Bill Davison	1943-1980	12 hours
Buck Clayton	1937-1960	8 hours
Harry Edison	1938-1978	6 hours
Clifford Brown	1953-1956	16.5 hours
Chet Baker	1963-1965	10.5 hours
Clark Terry	1952-1990	15 hours
Ernest "Punch" Miller	1925-1930	1.5 hours
<b>Trombones</b>		
Kid Ory	1925-1956	7.5 hours
J.C. Higginbotham	1928-1966	9 hours
Vic Dickinson	1938-1982	7.5 hours
J.J. Johnson	1946-1980	6 hours
Jack Teagarden	1928-1962	18 hours
Lawrence Brown	1930-1962	25.25 hours
Jimmy Harrison	1927-1930	0.75 hours
Keg Johnson	1933-1940	0.75 hours
Floyd O'Brien	1933-?	1.5 hours
Trummy Young	1934-1961	5 hours
<b>Big Bands</b>		
Duke Ellington And His Orchestra	1929-1972	192 hours
Duke's Sidemen	1936-1951	10.5 hours
Fletcher Henderson	1924-1937	9 hours
McKinney's Cotton Pickers	1928-1930	2 hours
California Ramblers	1922-1926	1 hour
Andy Kirk Orchestra	1924-1942	1.5 hours
Chick Webb's Orchestra	1929-1939	6 hours
Benny Goodman	1926-1986	50 hours

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<sup>16</sup> Although the majority of tapes in this collection are 90-minute tapes, a large number are 60-minute tapes, 100-minute tapes, 110-minute tapes, and 120-minute tapes.

## **Clarinets and Alto Saxes**

Benny Carter	1927-1988	21.5 hours
Johnny Hodges	1928-1970	58.5 hours
Frankie Trumbauer	1926-1936	6 hours
Pete Brown	1938-1957	3 hours
Charlie Parker	1940-1954	14 hours

## **Soprano Saxes**

Sydney Bechet	1923-1958	9 hours
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## **Clarinets**

Jimmie Noone	1923-1944	1.5 hours
Johnnie Dodds	1923-1940	10.5 hours
Frank Teschemacher	1927-1930	3 hours

## **Tenor Saxes**

Coleman Hawkins	1923-1968	24 hours
Chu Berry	1933-1941	7.5 hours
Ben Webster	1932-1959	13.5 hours
Bud Freeman	1927-1976	15 hours
Lester Young	1936-1956	15 hours
Stan Getz	1945-1981	15 hours
Scott Hamilton	1977-1981	9.5 hours

## **Pianos**

James P. Johnson	1921-1947	3 hours
Thomas "Fats" Waller	1922-1943	12 hours
Willie "The Lion" Smith	1934	1.5 hours
Jelly Roll Morton	1923-1938	9 hours
Art Tatum	1933-1956	12 hours
Teddy Wilson	1953-1980	21 hours
Earl Hines	1927-1974	15 hours
Joe Sullivan	1927-1961	4.5 hours
Gene Schroeder	1948-1952	4.5 hours
Thelonious Monk	1947-1971	10.5 hours
Bud Powell	1946-1960	7.5 hours
Bill Evans	1956-1979	9 hours
Oscar Peterson	1945-1979	16.5 hours
Andre Previn	1945-1958	1.5 hours

## **Vibraphones/Xylophones**

Lionel Hampton	1930-1991	10 hours
Red Norvo	1933-1975	10.5 hours

## **Guitars**

Eddie Lang	1926-1946	6 hours
Django Reinhardt	1935-1953	3 hours
Charlie Christian	1939-1991	1.5 hours
Joe Pass	1963-1983	6 hours
Barney Kessel	1952-1958	1.75 hours

## **Violin**

Joe Venuti	1926-1977	7.5 hours
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## **Female Vocalists**

Bessie Smith	1923-1933	4.5 hours
Billie Holiday	1933-1959	12 hours
Dinah Washington	1954-1955	1.5 hours

## **Male Vocalists**

Louis Armstrong	1923-1972	54 hours
Frank Sinatra	1940-1978	12 hours

## **Miscellaneous**

Mid 40's All Stars	1940s	1 hour
Mid 50's All Stars	1950s	3 hours